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FACTS AND COMMENTS
CONCERNING

BESSARABIA

1812

1940

Compiled by

A GROUP OF ROMANIAN PRESS

CORRESPONDENTS

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*Compiled by a group of
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BESSARABIA

1918-1945

Compiled by a group of
historians from the Soviet Union

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WOKING

Foreword

This booklet, dedicated to Bessarabia, is issued by a group of Romanian Press Correspondents. Preceded by a chronology of the main events which shaped the fate of this province, it contains summaries and extracts reprinted from articles, studies and research works written on the subject, as well as part of the memorandum submitted to the Peace Conference in 1919 by the official delegation of the representatives of the population of Bessarabia. It also includes extracts from a hand-book on Bessarabia published under the auspices of the British Foreign Office in 1920, reproduced by kind permission of the Controller, H.M. Stationery Office.

Since simultaneously with the third occupation of Bessarabia on July 3, 1940, Russia also occupied Northern Bucovina, a brief account of the status of this province as an organic fragment of the ancient Romanian Principality of Moldavia, and thus of Romania, is also given.

Sincere thanks are rendered to all contributors to this booklet, which is issued without any polemical intentions but simply as a matter of historical record.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
<i>Foreword</i>	5
<i>I. Chronology of Bessarabia</i>	9
<i>II. Documents and Memorandum presented at the Peace Conference by the Romanian Delegation on the Bessarabian Question</i>	13
<i>III. Extracts from a Booklet on Bessarabia prepared under the direction of the Historical Section of the Foreign Office</i>	27
<i>IV. Extracts and Summaries from Recent Studies of Bessarabia</i>	36
<i>V. Population of Bessarabia</i>	44
<i>VI. Land Reform and other Economic Improvements in Bessarabia since 1918</i>	47
<i>VII. Education in Bessarabia under Russian and under Romanian Administration</i>	50
<i>VIII. Romanian Treasures confiscated by the Soviets</i>	53
<i>IX. Letters to the British Press on the Bessarabian Question</i>	54
<i>X. Bucovina</i>	60
<i>Bibliography</i>	62

I

CHRONOLOGY OF BESSARABIA

Until 1812 Bessarabia was an organic part of the Romanian Principality of Moldavia. Under the Peace Treaty of Bucarest of May 16, 1812, which ended a long war between Turkey and Russia, Bessarabia was ceded to Russia. This cession of almost half of the Principality of Moldavia was made by the Turks and obtained by the Russians without the knowledge and against the will of the Moldavian Romanians. The Suzerainty Treaties which bound the Romanian Principalities to the Ottoman Porte guaranteed the integrity of Moldavia. But Turkey violated her pledge to maintain and defend Moldavian integrity.

1856. Partial justice was done to Moldavia at the end of the Crimean War, when the three southern districts of Bessarabia—Cahul, Ismail and Cetatea Alba—were returned to Moldavia, which was then united to Wallachia to form the United Principalities of Romania.

1877. The Romanian army under the command of Prince Charles, later King Charles I of Romania, crossed the Danube and occupied Nicopolis, following a telegraphic request for help from Grand Duke Nicholas of Russia, the commander-in-chief of the Russian army. The Russians were in great difficulties during the opening stage of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, and their defeat was only averted by the intervention of the Romanian army.

1878. After the Russian victory in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, Russia reoccupied the three districts in Southern Bessarabia, although Romania was her ally. At the Congress of Berlin (1878), by one of those recurrent interplays of compromise and bargain by which the balance of power was maintained in the nineteenth century, the Great Powers agreed that Russia should occupy the three Bessarabian districts. Russia was thus compensated for the curtailment of the spoils she tried to secure from Turkey in the Balkans by the Treaty of San Stephano.

November 3, 1917. In conformity with the principles of the Russian revolution (publicly proclaimed by Soviets) to grant liberty to the peoples within Russia to decide their own fate, Bessarabia declared itself autonomous.

February 6, 1918. Bessarabia publicly announced its independence as a republic.

April 9, 1918. The National Council of Bessarabia (Sfatul Țărei) proclaimed the union of Bessarabia with the mother country.

1920. During the negotiations at Copenhagen between the Soviet Government—represented by M. Litvinov and the Romanian delegates—on various questions affecting the two countries (e.g. the question of the return of the Romanian gold deposited at Moscow in the keeping of the Russian Government during the last war)¹ M. Litvinov recognized the right of Romania to Bessarabia, a view he shared with Tchitcherin, Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs.

October 28, 1920. By the Treaty of Paris of 1920, the union of Bessarabia with Romania was recognized by the Allied Powers.

1922. The Agrarian reform carried out over the whole territory of Greater Romania definitely consecrated the drastic land reform which had been effected in Bessarabia in 1918.

February 9, 1929. Russia and Romania adhered to the Kellogg-Briand Pact by which war is declared to be outlawed.

July 4, 1933. The Soviets and the neighbouring States, Romania included, signed a pact by which the co-signatories accepted the definition of the aggressor as formulated in the Politis Report to the Disarmament Conference of May 24, 1933. Paragraph 23 of the Report stated that "By territory is here meant territory over which a State actually exercises authority."

June 26, 1940. M. Molotov presented to the Romanian minister at Moscow an ultimatum by which the Soviets demanded the cession of Bessarabia to Russia, together with Northern Bucovina. The term of the ultimatum was twenty-four hours.

June 27, 1940. The Romanian minister handed over the reply of the Romanian Government, in which the latter asked the

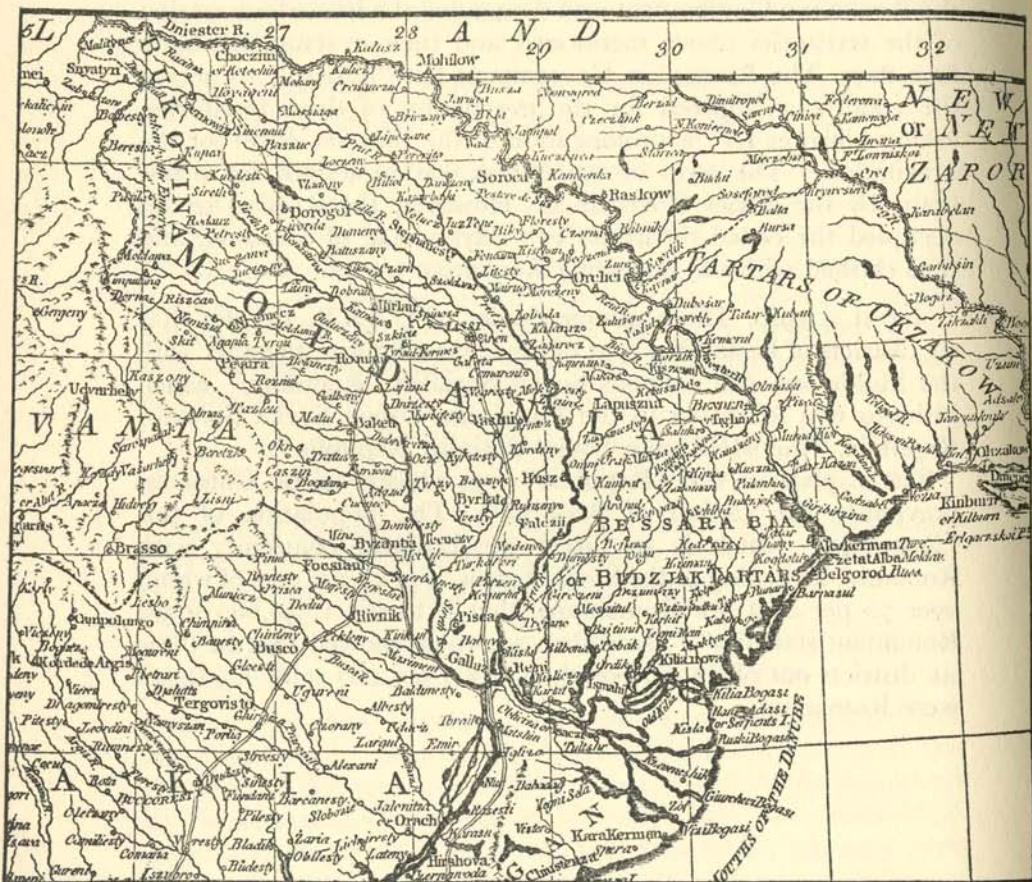
¹ See page 99.

Soviets to fix "the time and the place for conversations" in order to arrive at "a friendly agreement on all proposals that have been made by the Soviet Government."

June 27, 1940 (the same day). The Soviets rejected the offer of the Romanian Government and demanded the immediate cession of the territories above mentioned and their evacuation within four days. The Romanian Government felt "obliged" to accept the conditions imposed for the evacuation of these territories, asking however for "a prolongation of the time set down for the evacuation." The term of evacuation was prolonged for a few hours by the Soviet Government. However, the Russian troops occupied the ceded territories two days ahead of schedule, and thus clashed with the retreating Romanian troops.

August 3, 1940. The Supreme Soviet of U.S.S.R. decides that six districts of Bessarabia (out of nine) should form, together with the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist "Republic," which hitherto was federated to the Ukrainian Union Soviet Socialist Republic, "the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic."

The capital of the "Republic" was chosen to be Chisinau, previously the capital of Bessarabia. The population of this "Republic," which is in direct geographical contiguity with Romania, according to the Soviet Status, is of 2 : 200,000, of whom over 70 per cent are Romanians, that is to say 1,540,000 souls. Romanian statistics of December 29, 1930, showed that in these six districts out of a total population of 1,905,287 souls 1,338,440 were Romanians.



From a map published by the Imperial Academy of St. Petersburg and printed by R. Lawrie and J. Whittle, London, 1794. It shows the territory of Bessarabia as part of the Romanian principality of Moldavia and the appellation of Bessarabia given only to a small district of the province.

II

DOCUMENTS AND MEMORANDUM PRESENTED AT THE PEACE CONFERENCE BY THE ROMANIAN DELEGATION ON THE BESSARABIAN QUESTION

We publish below extracts from the Memorandum presented to the Peace Conference by the Romanian Delegation on the question of Bessarabia. It will be seen that the data and the arguments retain all their weight as applied to the third occupation of Bessarabia by Russia in 1940.

I. THE ANNEXATION OF BESSARABIA TO RUSSIA

Bessarabia is that part of the former Romanian Principality of Moldavia lying between the Pruth and the Dniester rivers which Russia annexed in 1812. A few Russian writers and politicians try to find a justification for this annexation in the fact that in 1812 Russia took Bessarabia not from Moldavia but from Turkey. At least so they claim, but the truth, as history relates it, is very different.

In 1812 Bessarabia had been part and parcel of the Romanian Principality of Moldavia for centuries without a break. The Romanian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia then enjoyed complete autonomy on the basis of the old capitulation arrangement contracted with the Turkish Empire, which guaranteed to them both internal independence and territorial integrity in return for an annual tribute.

Moreover, in 1812 Russia was well aware that in annexing Bessarabia she was taking possession of a Romanian province, part of Moldavia, not of a Turkish province. The best proof of it is that after the annexation Russia was obliged to maintain in Bessarabia the old Moldavian organization, administrative, judiciary and educational, and that in 1818 she granted Bessarabia her national autonomy which was in force until 1828. In fact a few of the Moldavian laws have been retained to this very day.

This is what the great Russian lawyer, A. N. Egunof, wrote on the subject in 1868:

Up to its annexation to the Russian Empire in 1812, Bessarabia was under the same regime as Moldavia, of which it was but a part. Consequently neither history nor historical documents can afford to leave Moldavia out of consideration. So it is impossible to discuss the administration of Bessarabia up to the time of its annexation to Russia without referring to the Divan of Moldavia whose rule extended over Bessarabia. There is not a single estate in Bessarabia that cannot show documents emanating from the Divan of Moldavia.

To our own days, in the actions brought before the Bessarabian courts suitors are wont to cite the decisions of the Divan, which being approved by the Moldavian princes and being issued by them in the form of diplomas (*chrisobules*), according to article 1606 of the Xth tome of the Russian civil laws cannot be set aside by our courts and thus retain their full force and value.¹

In annexing Bessarabia in 1812, Russia was but following her old policy of conquest and resuming her drive towards Constantinople and the Bosphorus, under the fallacious pretence of protecting the Christians of the Turkish Empire. Let us recall the fact that Peter the Great conquered, in 1712, part of the right bank of the Dnieper; Catherine II, in 1772, conquered the territory between the Boug and the Dniester. Alexander I, in 1806, occupied Moldavia and Wallachia, but after the Bucaresti Treaty of 1812 retained Bessarabia proper (the region lying along the Danube and the Black Sea) as well as half of Moldavia, to the whole of which was given the comprehensive name of "Bessarabia."

During the course of the nineteenth century the great European Powers, realizing the threatening danger of that conquering policy of Russia, stepped in and after the Crimean War in 1856 kept away the Russians from the mouth of the Danube by returning to Moldavia the southern part of Bessarabia.

But Russia, taking advantage of a turn of events favourable to her policy, that is the defeat of France in 1870, and flouting the convention entered into with Romania, took back from Romania Southern Bessarabia (minus the mouth of the Danube), in spite of the helping hand which the Romanian army had generously lent her in her war against the Turks (war of 1877-78).

At the time of the Russian revolution of 1905 a powerful Moldavian national movement set in the whole of Bessarabia. The reaction which followed checked this movement. But as soon

¹ Publications of the Bessarabian Committee on Statistics; vol. iii, p. 34; Kichinev, 1868.

as the Russian revolution of 1917 had proclaimed the right of peoples to decide their own fate, Bessarabia declared herself autonomous (November 3, 1917); soon after, on February 6, 1918, she publicly announced her independence as a republic, and finally on April 9, 1918, the National Council (Sfatul Țărei) proclaimed the union of Bessarabia with the mother country, Romania.

2. BESSARABIA UNDER RUSSIAN RULE (1812-1917)

ATTEMPTS AT RUSSIFICATION

Soon after the annexation of Bessarabia the Russian imperial authorities tried, by every means in their power, to Russify this Romanian province. This is how they set about it:

(a) ADMINISTRATION

As far back as 1828 the local autonomy granted to Bessarabia in 1818 was withdrawn, and a purely Muscovite regime was introduced. The Moldavian national movement and the entire local administrative organization had to make way for a Russian administration and officials brought over from Great Russia.¹

(b) EDUCATION

The Moldavian people were kept in the most complete ignorance. Whatever few Romanian schools existed before the annexation were closed; as to the Russian schools that were opened after—primary, secondary and professional—they had but one aim: to denationalize and Russify the Moldavian people. The use of the Romanian tongue was strictly prohibited in the schools. At the Romanian frontier, under most positive orders, no Romanian book was allowed to enter into Bessarabia. As a consequence Bessarabian students could not gain any knowledge of Romanian history, literature and culture until later on in life, and, strange to say, by means of the few Romanian books they could find in the libraries of the great Russian University centres.¹

¹ The fact is most clearly shown by statistics giving the proportion of illiterates in Bessarabia in 1897 by nation: Germans, 47 per cent; Poles, 46 per cent; Jews, 63·6 per cent; Russians (Velico-Russians and Bielo-Russians, that is, Great Russians and White Russians), 68·5 per cent; Ukrainians, 90·8 per cent; Gagautzi, 93·2 per cent; and finally Moldavians, 93·9 per cent. Moreover, it must be added that the Germans, Poles, Jews and Russians had schools where their mother tongue was taught, while the Ukrainians and the Moldavians had no schools of their own.

(c) CHURCH

The Church was another powerful means of Russification; numerous bishops as well as many Russian priests were brought over from the interior of Russia to be appointed in Bessarabia. They succeeded in preventing the use of Romanian in churches and services were conducted in Russian, although the people understood not a word of this language. The leaders of the Church of Bessarabia, always selected among Russians, gave a good deal more attention to the work of Russian propaganda than to the needs of public worship.

(d) JUSTICE

The administration of justice was also delivered over to the Russians, who brought it down to very little; it is true that in return officials of all categories were granted every privilege. Needless to say that, as a rule, Romanians were allowed no room in the judiciary.

In the whole province of Bessarabia there was but one court of law, and before this court Romanian, the tongue of the majority of the nation, could not be used.

(e) ARMY OF OCCUPATION

The army of occupation, the guards stationed at the frontier, all men foreign to the country, as well as the officials (*tchinovniki*) of all categories, were obviously so many tools to be readily used in the work of Russification. With the same end in view the Moldavian soldiers were sent to other provinces of Russia.

(f) EXPATRIATION AND COLONIZATION WITHIN THE PROVINCE

The Russians, realizing that the methods just mentioned did not go far enough to allow them to stamp a Russian imprint on the province, took then some radical steps; they forced the native population to leave the country and brought into the province foreign settlers. Many Romanians (Moldavians) were taken from their villages and sent as far as Siberia, Turkestan, the Amur river, the Caucasus or the Ural mountains; Velico-Russian, Bulgarian and Ukrainian settlers were brought in to take their places.

As will be seen later on, all these attempts at Russification

proved vain; thanks to its marvellous vitality, the Romanian people of Bessarabia held its own and kept its tongue, its national customs and the consciousness of its origin.

3. RESULTS OF THE POLICY OF RUSSIFICATION IN BESSARABIA

(a) LACK OF CULTURE, MOLDAVIAN TENACITY

The closing of national schools, the ban placed on the introduction of Romanian books into Bessarabia, the persecution of the Romanian tongue excluded from all manifestation of an official character, resulted in keeping the Romanian people in a state of the deepest ignorance and excluding them from all participation in public life in Bessarabia. But clinging to their land and traditions they religiously preserved their name, their Moldavian tongue and in their hearts the memory of old Moldavia.

During the hundred and six years of Russian oppression in Bessarabia the mass of the people were debarred from all possibility of intellectual progress, and this province was thus left behind time by more than a century.

(b) ECONOMIC STAGNATION

With regard to economic conditions, the whole activity of Russian authorities aimed only at furthering the material interests of Great Russia, its politicians and its officials.

In a systematic manner all the industrial, economic and financial establishments, all the factories and works which utilize the resources of Bessarabia were placed on the left bank of the Dniester or in Odessa. The best instance that can be given of the carelessness of the Russian Government and its utter indifference to the best interests of Bessarabia is the fact that, under the many years of Russian rule, only 820 versts (approximately 875 km.) of railroad were built in the province, and only 153·2 versts (approximately 163 km.) of roads, to meet the needs of a population of 2,500,000 men covering an area of 44,000 sq. km.

The revenue derived from Bessarabia served largely to pay the Russian officials and allow them to conduct their work of Russian propaganda; the excess was applied to the needs of the different provinces of Central Russia.

(c) BAD SANITARY CONDITIONS

Russia did hardly anything to improve the sanitary conditions in Bessarabia. In 1912 there were in Bessarabia only 236 physicians (and many of them were mere officials) and 57 hospitals for a population of 2,500,000 inhabitants. Under such circumstances it is easy to see that the Bessarabian people fell a ready prey to all the epidemics that came from Russia and periodically scourged the province.¹

It can be then asserted that, with regard to progress and civilization in general, the Russian rule which weighed heavily on Bessarabia for a hundred years proved far worse, far more intolerant than ever was the long Turkish tyranny over the different Christian peoples. Moreover, Russian writers and statesmen themselves like Storojenko, Danilewski, Afanasief-Ciujbinsky, Kisseleff, etc., admit the truth of the statements we have just made.

4. FAILURE OF ALL ATTEMPTS AT RUSSIFICATION IN BESSARABIA

A great number of Russian writers of repute, professors and statisticians, have noticed the failure at different times of all attempts at Russification, and at the same time admitted the Moldavian (Romanian) national character of Bessarabia.

According to official statistics, the population of Bessarabia was in 1816, four years after the annexation of 500,000 inhabitants, almost all Romanians (more than 86 per cent).

It was only after the annexation (1812) that a colonization was started with Bulgarians, Germans and Russo-Ukrainians, who, however, did not constitute a steady element and had a bad reputation. As a proof we will quote a few lines from the official report sent in 1827 by the Russian governor of Bessarabia, Timcovski, to his chief, General Pahlen, governor of Odessa:

The province of Bessarabia is composed of two categories of inhabitants: native Moldavians and tramps who slipped into it at different times and whose morals have not improved.

Later on, in 1862, the Russian statistician, Staff Captain

¹ Compare this state of affairs with the progress achieved under Romanian rule as illustrated by the data published on page 49.

Zastchuk, in his book *Materials for the Geography and Statistics of Russia: the Province of Bessarabia*,¹ says:

The Moldavians (Romanians) form the chief part of the population, about three-fourths of the total number.

In the same way, in his book published in 1878, *Geography of the Province of Bessarabia*, a work approved by the Ministry of Public Instruction for the use of secondary and primary schools in Russia, the Russian geographer, P. P. Soroka, says at page 80:

The Moldavians constitute the greater part of the population, amounting approximately to three-fourths of it.

At the same time the total population of Bessarabia was 1,500,000 inhabitants.

During the whole period extending from 1812 to 1897 all the most important Russian writers and geographers admit that the Romanian element forms the chief mass of the population in a proportion of about 75 per cent.

After a period of Russification of over sixty years, in 1871 the Russian statistician General Sbroutcheff reduces the percentage of Romanian inhabitants to 68 per cent; but it was only in 1897 that in a manner as unaccountable as it was sudden the Russian statisticians brought these figures far down, allowing to the Romanian population in Bessarabia only 47·6 per cent of the total instead of 68 per cent. These garbled statistics, meant to damage the Romanian element, appeared for the first time in 1897; and they are to be accounted for by the keen desire on the part of Russian officials in Bessarabia first to vindicate their work of Russian propaganda and second to please the central authorities; they had to get ready for the coming festivities, on the occasion of the centenary of the annexation of Bessarabia, such documents as would show in a favourable light the result of their attempts at Russification.

But it ought to be added that this practice of tampering with census returns deceived none of the writers who knew Bessarabia. So P. Crushevan, in the *Almanac of Bessarabia* for the year 1903, page 175, shows that the proportion of Romanians in Bessarabia is 75 per cent; while Laskow, in his work *Bessarabia at the Time of the Centenary of her Annexation to Russia, 1812-1912: a historical, statistical and geographical survey on Bessarabia*,² credits the

¹ Petrograd, 1862, pp. 151, 450.

² Kichinev, 1912, p. 53.

Romanian element with a percentage of 70 per cent. We purposely refrain from quoting the Romanian authors who, basing their calculations on Russian official statistics, constitute a percentage of 67 to 70 Romanians.

But we cannot fail to mention the official report of the American, Captain John Kaba, a member of the Hoover American mission in Romania, who after due investigations estimates the number of Romanians in Bessarabia at 65-66 per cent of the total population.¹

To set out in clear light the falsifications of Russian statistics from the year 1897, we will ask L. Casso, the former Russian Minister of Public Instruction under Tsar Nicholas II, and professor at the University of Moscow, to tell us what trust can be put in official documents:

Even to-day (1913), says he, the information which we receive about that far-away border province from the central administration is not always accurate. The *Russian Year-Book for 1910*, for instance, which is published by the Central Committee on Statistics at the Ministry of the Interior, while mentioning the different nationalities of Bessarabia finds no room for the Moldavian nationality, although it constitutes more than half of the total population of Bessarabia.²

It should be added also that there are in Bessarabia no "non-Romanian parts." The whole of Bessarabia is Romanian, for the foreign elements to be found in it either live in the towns (Jews, Greeks, Russians, Armenians, etc.) or, when they live in the country, form small islands lost in a sea of Romanian population (German, Bulgarian, Gagaoutzi, Ukrainian colonists). Besides, the Velico-Russians, apart from the official class, are few and far between. Official statistics wrongly set down as Velico-Russian all cultural inhabitants of Bessarabia who speak literary Russian.

The case of the Moldavians beyond the Dniester is a very different one; over there is to be found a Moldavian population of more than 500,000 people, as the Russian maps themselves show, living in compact masses in the great valleys of the Dniester, the Boug, etc., and along the forests to the north of the Chersonian steppe.

All this goes to prove that even from an ethnic point of view the Russian claims to Bessarabia or part of Bessarabia are utterly

¹ Captain J. Kaba, *Political and Economic Study of Bessarabia*, June 1919, p. 45.

² L. Casso, *Russia along the Danube and the Organisation of the Province of Bessarabia*; Moscow, 1913, p. 223.

lacking in foundation, and all the more that it was never Romania's policy to ask for the recognition of any rights of her own on the Romanian compact groups beyond the Dniester, in the region between this river and the Dnieper.

5. BESSARABIA UNDER THE ROMANIANS¹

(a) RE-ESTABLISHING ORDER AND PEACE IN BESSARABIA

After the union of Bessarabia with Romania (April 9, 1918) the Romanian Government and the local authorities were obliged to take different steps to ensure public order and peace within the province which had been subjected to a rule of terror by armed bands of bolsheviki, Russian deserters from the Romanian front, who were fleeing across Bessarabia, killing, plundering and burning down everything on their way.

After having swept these bands out of Bessarabia, the Romanian army had to protect the Dniester line against repeated attempts of the bolsheviki, who, now masters of the situation in Russia, had officially declared war on Romania to force her to make peace more quickly with the Central Powers. Under the protection of Romania the Bessarabian population was able once more from January 1918 to live and work unmolested, each citizen peacefully attending to his business, while beyond the Dniester anarchy and chaos still reign supreme.

The orderly conditions and the security that are found now in Bessarabia daily attract numerous refugees from Russia, who flee by thousands from the frightful anarchy and regime of terror started by the bolsheviki.

(b) STEPS TO IMPROVE THE MATERIAL WELFARE OF THE POPULATION

After the union with Romania it was found possible in Bessarabia to solve one of the greatest social problems, the agrarian reform, for which the peasants had so long waited. This reform was carried out on a thoroughly democratic basis. To make the peasants landowners, all the private estates over 100 hectares were turned over to them; as to land belonging to the State or unalienable estates owned by pious foundations, they were almost entirely also apportioned to the peasants. Of course the land was

¹ The Bessarabian delegation was able to refer, for the information of the Peace Conference, to concrete improvements in the administration, economic and cultural life a year after the union of the province to Romania.

not taken outright from the former owners, as certain representatives of the Extreme Left claimed ought to be done, but against a fair compensation, due consideration being given to the quality of the land.

In such a way more than 340,000 peasant families became the owners of over 1,000,000 hectares, which for two years they have cultivated for their own benefit.

(c) ADMINISTRATIVE REORGANIZATION

The administrative system of the province was made more democratic by changing the organization of the zemstvos (district councils), volosti (sub-district councils) and parish councils. The old electoral right, based on the actual ownership of so much land, was replaced by universal suffrage. Thanks to the good understanding that prevails between the kingdom and the united sister provinces, Bessarabia is not administered from outside but retains a valuable measure of political and educational autonomy.

(d) REORGANIZATION OF JUSTICE AND OF THE SANITARY SYSTEM

In place of the single Russian court which existed before for the whole of Bessarabia, nine courts were created—one for every district—and one Court of Appeal at Kichinev: for years Bessarabia had been urging on Russian authorities their pressing need for a Court of Appeal. All in vain. At the same time eighty-three Justices of the Peace were appointed to take the place of the forty-four *Zemski Natchalniki*, a sort of special judge for the rural population *who had also administrative and police duties*.

With regard to the sanitary service, it was completely reorganized after the union, and the number of physicians and hospitals was increased as much as possible considering conditions and the short space of time.

(e) POLITICAL, INTELLECTUAL AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Political, intellectual and religious freedom such as was proclaimed by the Russian revolution was maintained in Bessarabia and put into practice in the most unconditional manner without discrimination either of nationality or of religion. The best proof of it is furnished by the fact that to-day in Bessarabia there are at work schools, primary as well as secondary, belonging to all the foreign nationalities (Ukrainians, Jews, Bulgarians, Germans).

6. ELEMENTS OF DISSATISFACTION

In spite of all the efforts of Romania and of the serious improvements she brought about in Bessarabia, it is nevertheless obvious that the local situation is still influenced by the fact that Bessarabia has successively gone through a revolution, a period of bolshevism, and finally all the difficulties attendant on a war.

These peculiar circumstances caused a certain amount of dissatisfaction, which cannot be laid to the charge of the Romanian regime, as some parties concerned would have us believe.

The majority of dissatisfied persons is made up, on the one hand, of former Russian officials who are not even Bessarabians by birth, of Russian jingoes, of big Russian and pro-Russian landowners, who are still dreaming of the old Russian days because they were all hit by the agrarian reform; and on the other hand of ultra-radical elements who, under the influence of bolshevism and foreign agitators, look askance at the re-establishment of order and the carrying out of reforms.¹

7. THE QUESTION OF A PLEBISCITE

Has a plebiscite any meaning in a country where the uncontested autochthonous nation still forms the absolute majority (by at least two-thirds of the total), and where no other nation can boast a percentage surpassing one-eighth of the total population?

(1) There is no ground for a plebiscite in a country which has always been inhabited by a large majority of Romanians, for such is the case in Bessarabia, where the other nations hardly constitute a bare 12 per cent of the total population (Slavs, 12 per cent; Jews, 10 per cent; the other nations still less).

A plebiscite would find no more justification in Bessarabia than in Poland and in Finland, and yet it occurs to nobody to propose one in these two countries. From an historical as well as an ethnical point of view Bessarabia is placed in the very same conditions, since she was subjected under Russian rule to the same regime and the same attempts at Russification as Poland and Finland.

(2) The population of Bessarabia, taking its stand on the principle of self-determination proclaimed by the Russian revolution and popularized by M. Wilson's statements of principles and by the Versailles Peace Conference, *expressed in a solemn and*

¹ Observations made in 1919, but which even to-day have a bearing of actuality.

emphatic manner, through means of the National Assembly, its desire to be united for ever with Romania. And it expressed it at two different times: on April 9, 1918, and on December 10, 1918 (see annexed documents).

(3) In some weeks from now there will take place in Bessarabia, as well as in the old Romanian kingdom and the other sister provinces united with Romania (Bucovina, Transylvania, the Banat), elections for a "Constituante" of Greater Romania. The vote which is to be taken on the basis of universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage will be the best expression of the will of the Bessarabian people and the most telling of plebiscites.

(4) As a matter of fact, it would be impossible at the present time to take a plebiscite in Bessarabia on account of the war which the Russian bolsheviki are still forcing on Romania, and the end of which is not yet in sight.

On the other hand, a postponement of such a plebiscite to an undetermined future would constitute a great danger for the population of Bessarabia. Bessarabia is very tired of the disturbances and state of uneasiness brought about by the revolution, bolshevism and five years of unceasing warfare. The plebiscite would only invite fresh agitation; it would turn Bessarabia once more into an open field for propaganda, restlessness, struggles and corruption. This would entail upon the population of Bessarabia the most lamentable consequences.

For all these reasons a plebiscite is not to be admitted for Bessarabia.

Paris, September 5, 1919

ION G. PELIVAN

Delegate of the central Committee of the peasants of Bessarabia, former deputy to the Sfatul Tărei (National Council);

ION ST. CODREANU

Delegate of the Congress of rural communities, former deputy to the Sfatul Tărei (National Council);

SERGE-VICTOR COUJBA

Delegate of the educational associations of Bessarabia, professor at the People's University of Kichinev;

GEORGES NASTASE

Delegate of the students of Bessarabia, former deputy to the Sfatul Tărei (National Council).

Among the annexed documents which were presented by the Delegation to the Peace Conference is the resolution passed by the National Council of Bessarabia on April 9, 1919, from which we quote the first characteristic paragraph:

"In the name of the people of Bessarabia the National Council declares:

"The Moldavian democratic Republic (Bessarabia)—constituted as it is by the land extending between the Pruth, the Dniester, the Danube, the Black Sea and the frontiers which were formerly common with Austria—torn by Russia, a hundred years ago, from old Moldavia, now in virtue of its historical rights and of its national rights, on the basis of the principle that alone the people can decide their fate, unites this day on for ever with her mother country, Romania."

The resolution ends thus:

"Long live the Union of Bessarabia with Romania everywhere and for ever!"

(signed)

*The Secretary of the National
Council*

I. BUZDUGAN

*The President of
the National Council*

ION INCULETS

The Memorandum concludes with letters of credentials from the bodies the delegates represented.

It may be of interest to quote the second credential by which Messrs. Ion Codreanu and Sergiu Cujba are empowered to represent the General Congress and the representatives of rural communities in all Bessarabia. This reads as follows:

"The general Congress of representatives of rural communities of all Bessarabia, meeting in the capital of the country, at Kichinev, on July 3rd and 4th, gives its two members, Messrs. Ion Codreanu and Sergiu Cujba, power to go to Paris and place

before the Supreme Council and the political organizations which meet there the desire of the inhabitants of Bessarabia to remain united for ever with Romania, their mother country, who alone, at the present moment, is up in arms in Bessarabia ready to face the threatening danger of Russian bolshevism and thus ensures, for the future, the full and steady development of the province."

The President of the Congress

VASILE TSANTSU

The Secretary

MIHAIL MINCIUNA

III

EXTRACTS FROM A BOOKLET¹ ON BESSARABIA PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE

In giving the following extracts from a study of Bessarabia prepared by the Foreign Office in 1920, we could do nothing better than quote from the editorial note which serves as an introduction to the booklet the following relevant lines:

"In the spring of 1917," reads the Introduction, "the Foreign Office, in connection with the preparation which they were making for the work of the Peace Conference, established a special section whose duty it should be to provide the British Delegates to the Peace Conference with information in the most convenient form—geographical, economic, historical, social, religious and political—respecting the different countries, districts, islands, etc., with which they might have to deal. In addition, volumes were prepared on certain general subjects, mostly of an historical nature, concerning which it appeared that a special study would be useful. . . . Now that the Conference has nearly completed its task, the Foreign Office, in response to numerous enquiries and requests, has decided to issue the books for public use, believing that they will be useful to students of history, politics, economics and foreign affairs, to publicists generally and to business men and travellers. . . ."

There are four chapters in the booklet dealing with Bessarabia at the time when the revolution had broken out in Russia in 1917, namely: (1) Geography, physical and political; (2) Political History; (3) Social and Political conditions; (4) Economic conditions.

In the first chapter of the booklet, in regard to the ethnical character of the population, reference is made to the difficulty in determining the exact proportions of the various races who inhabit the province. The chief difficulty—reads the commentary—lies in the fact that the figures of the official Russian census, taken in 1897, differ very materially from other Russian statistics

¹ Published by H.M. Stationery Office, 1920.

BESSARABIA 1812-1940

of 1891 (see tables below). Though its accuracy may be doubtful, the 1897 census has been taken as the base of the following account of the various racial elements in Bessarabia.

The Moldavians (Romanians), whatever figures be accepted, form without a doubt the largest element in the population. The census of 1897 puts them at 47·6 per cent of the whole, and the 1891 figures at 66 per cent.¹

Draghicescu, a Russian senator, writing in 1918, quotes the distribution by districts as follows, according to the Russian 1891 statistics:

<i>District</i>			<i>Moldavians</i> per cent	<i>Russians</i> per cent	<i>Others</i> per cent
Khotin (Hotin) ²	..	..	80	16·5	3·5
Soroki (Soroca)	..	..	82	3	15
Byeltsi (Balti)	..	..	87	8	5
Kisinev (Chisinau)	..	..	80	10	10
Orgyeev (Orhei)	..	..	65	15	15
Bender	..	..	60	22	18
Akkerman (Cetatea Alba)	..	..	40	35	25
Izmail (Ismail)	..	..	34	23·5	42·3
Bessarabia	..	..	66	15·6	19·4

According to the 1897 census, the figures for the principal nationalities by districts are given in the table opposite.

On page 28 of the booklet is added: "While it is not proposed here to enter into any detailed statistics, it should not be overlooked that the official Russian statistics of 1891 returned out of a total population of 1,641,599 1,089,995 Moldavians and 223,251 Ukrainians (Little Russians), the next nationality in numbers. There is, in fact, apart from the extreme northern district of Khotin and the mixed districts of Southern Bessarabia (the Budzhak), a big Romanian majority in the bulk of the province; and, if it be remembered that in the neighbouring Ukrainian provinces of Kherson and Podolia there are large Romanian minorities, the Ukrainian claim for a share of the territory of Bessarabia is hardly justified."

¹ See the adjoining two tables dealing with the results of the Russian census of 1891 and 1897.

² The names in brackets on this page and on the opposite table, which have been added by the compiler, are the Romanian appellation of the localities in question.

PRINCIPAL NATIONALITIES BY DISTRICTS

District	Total	Romanians	Little Russians (Ukrainians)	Great Russians	Jews	Germans	Bulgars
Khotin (Hotin)	307,532	73,303 (23·8 %)	163,738 (53·2 %)	19,361 (6·3 %)	47,950 (15·6 %)	—	—
Soroki (Soroca)	218,861	138,351 (63·2 %)	35,094 (16·0 %)	10,678 (4·9 %)	31,162 (14·2 %)	—	—
Byeltsi (Balti)	211,448	140,201 (66·3 %)	24,067 (11·3 %)	14,278 (6·8 %)	27,252 (12·9 %)	2,145 (1·0 %)	—
Kishinev (Chisinau)	279,657	175,926 (62·9 %)	5,196 (1·9 %)	33,425 (11·9 %)	54,486 (19·5 %)	2,353 (0·9 %)	—
Orgyeev (Orhei)	213,478	166,218 (77·8 %)	11,887 (5·6 %)	5,708 (2·7 %)	26,680 (12·5 %)	—	—
Bender (Tighina)	194,915	87,984 (45·1 %)	21,048 (10·8 %)	18,622 (9·5 %)	16,643 (8·6 %)	5,613 (3·0 %)	14,833 (7·6 %)
Akkerman (Cetatea Alba)	265,247	43,441 (16·3 %)	70,797 (26·7 %)	25,661 (9·6 %)	12,280 (4·6 %)	43,389 (16·3 %)	56,541 (21·3 %)
Izmail (Ismail)	244,274	95,495 (39·1 %)	47,871 (19·5 %)	30,502 (12·5 %)	11,715 (4·8 %)	4,781 (1·9 %)	30,581 (12·5 %)
Bessarabia	1,935,412	920,919 (47·6 %)	379,698 (19·6 %)	158,235 (8·1 %)	228,168 (11·8 %)	58,281 (3·1 %)	101,961 (5·2 %)

There is a discrepancy of 88,150 between this total and that obtained by adding together the figures given for the various nationalities, caused by the omission of the smaller peoples.

RUSSIAN EXPANSION IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

In the chapter dealing with the political history of the province there is a paragraph of compact information on the Russian expansion towards the south, when the first attempts were made to annex the province which was part of the Principality of Moldavia:

"The century 1594-1696 was a gloomy time in the history of the province. Cossack, Polish and Turkish invasions in turn laid it waste and prevented its natural development. 1696 marks the beginning of Russian expansion towards the South under Peter the Great. The fate of the province for the next two centuries largely depended on the fluctuations in Russo-Turkish relations. In 1739, for instance, the Russian armies occupied Northern Bessarabia on their way to Moldavia, only to abandon it at the Treaty of Belgrade. In 1769, again, the armies of Catherine the Great occupied Bessarabia, but lost it by the Peace of Kuchuk Kainarji. A third war in 1787 led to the occupation of the bulk of the province by the Russian armies under Suvarov. The Peace of Jassy (iasy) in 1792 brought the Russian frontiers permanently as far as the Dniester. In 1806 a new war broke out between Russia and Turkey. The troops of General Michelson occupied Bessarabia, and the Russian armies pushed on into Moldavia proper, the annexation of the whole of which the Russian Government hoped to achieve. The imminence of war with Napoleon, however, forced Alexander I to content himself with less than he had hoped for. He hurriedly concluded, on May 28, 1812, the Treaty of Bucarest, by which Moldavia was divided into two parts, and the eastern part, the whole of what is now known as Bessarabia, passed under the Russian Crown." (Page 14 of the booklet.)

THE FIRST ANNEXATION OF BESSARABIA BY RUSSIA

The circumstances on which the first annexation of Bessarabia by Russia was committed, and the reversal from a policy of benevolent despotism which characterized the beginnings of the Russian rule in the province to one of deliberate Russification, are described thus:

"That date [the year 1812 (see the paragraph above)] is the

most important in the history of Bessarabia. The new province was at first assured of special conditions. The population was promised exemption from military service and freedom from taxation for three years. Kishinev (Chisinau) was chosen as the capital of the country, which was allowed a Governor of Romanian race. A special Exarch for the Church was nominated by the Holy Synod at Moscow. On the other hand, a strong army of occupation held the country. A few Russian seminaries and schools were founded, and Bessarabia was separated from contact with the Romanian countries across the Pruth. Southern Bessarabia—the Budzhak, as the Turks had called it—where the population, owing to the many vicissitudes of its history, was already of a varied character, was still further denationalized. Colonists of various nations were settled or allowed to settle there. Lipovans and other Russian heretics were permitted to make their homes there, and Bulgars escaping from oppression were welcomed. Above all, considerable colonies of Germans were called in to aid the economic development of what was in parts a mere wilderness.

“Before long, however, the special privileges, of which the Tsar had at first assured his new subjects, were withdrawn and a period of complete Russification set in.

“The upper classes, the boyars, offered little effective protest to this. They learnt to look to Petersburg rather than to Jassy, and before long had become completely enamoured of Russian ways and out of sympathy with the old nationalist feeling of the province.

“The trade of Bessarabia passed rapidly into the hands of the Jews, Germans, Bulgars, Greeks and Armenians. The peasant population (the great majority) remained, however, untouched. Left to themselves they went on living their old life, speaking their Romanian dialect and preserving their national customs. The Tsarist horror of popular education saved them from the compulsory Russification they would have undergone had they attended the few schools set up by the Russian authorities; and they are to-day what they have always been—uninterested in questions of higher politics.” (Pages 15-16.)

REUNION OF THE THREE SOUTHERN DISTRICTS OF
BESSARABIA TO MOLDAVIA

The brief episode of the reunion of the southern part of Bessarabia to Moldavia is given in the following account:

"As a result of the Crimean War the territorial arrangements made by the Peace of Bucarest were in part modified. The victorious allies imposed on Russia the surrender of part of the province. By article 20 of the Treaty of Paris the new frontier between Russia and Moldavia returned to Moldavia a great part of the Budzhak, roughly all the territory to the south of a line drawn from Akkerman to Bolgrad, and to the west of a line drawn from Bolgrad to Catamori on the Pruth. This partial reversal of the arrangement of the Treaty of Bucarest was hailed with delight by Romanians, though, in fact, the part of Bessarabia returned to Romania was that which, owing to the devastations of former times and the recent influx of foreign colonists, had come to be racially the least Romanian part of the whole province. But for the next twenty-two years Romania had the satisfaction of possessing at least a part of her old Bessarabian dominions." (Page 16.)

THE SECOND ANNEXATION OF BESSARABIA BY RUSSIA

There is a detailed account in the booklet of the circumstances in which the second annexation of Bessarabia was effected, which we reproduce in its entirety:

"The Russian Government, however, waited only for a favourable opportunity of upsetting the settlement made by the Treaty of Paris. Just as in 1871 it succeeded in securing a complete revision of the Black Sea clauses of that Treaty, so a few years later it succeeded in reversing the decision about Bessarabia. Already in September of 1876 the prospect of war between Russia and Turkey loomed nearer; and in view of the fact that a passage for Russian troops through Romanian territory would be necessary, the question of Russo-Romanian relations at once became an urgent one. The Romanian Prime Minister, Ion Bratianu, paid a visit to Alexander II at Livadia, and discussed the question. Already from this conversation Bratianu gathered that Russian policy was aiming at the retrocession of the three districts of

Bessarabia lost in 1856. This was no pleasant prospect for Romania, even if she were to be compensated with a part or all the undeveloped province of the Dobrudja. But it was clear to Bratianu that, whether he liked it or not, the Russian Government was determined on war with Turkey and on a passage for its troops through Romania. He looked in vain to the other Powers for any support for Romania, and was ultimately forced to accommodate himself to the idea of a line the Russian troops could pass through. Nor was any help to be found in Turkey, who, under cover of constitutional reform, was seeking to reduce the Romanian principality to the level of a mere 'privileged province.' Lest worse should befall, the Romanian Government hastened to make terms with Russia. One clause of the Treaty concluded on April 16, 1877, provided for the 'integrity' of Romanian territory. Unfortunately, as the Romanian Government subsequently found, Russia did not consider that this promise extended to the Bessarabian possessions of Romania.

"On April 24th Russia declared war on Turkey, and Russian troops entered Romanian territory. The Romanian army for the time being was refused the privilege of co-operating as an allied force with the Russians, who were confident of being able to achieve their ends unaided. By the beginning of July, moreover, the Romanian Government were already aware of the fact that Russia had included the re-annexation of southern Bessarabia as one of its war aims. By the end of the month the non-success of the Russian advance compelled the Russian Government to appeal for the Romanian assistance that it had hitherto despised, and by the first week of August the Romanian army invaded Bulgaria. In the course of operations which followed, especially at Plevna, Russia's new ally contributed greatly to the success of the offensive. By the end of the year the Russian troops were in front of Constantinople; and on January 31, 1878, Turkey was forced to conclude the humiliating peace of San Stefano.

"In return for her assistance Romania looked for some satisfaction by Russia of her demands, which included the occupation of the Danube fortresses, the possession of the delta, and a compensation of about £4,000,000. All these demands were ignored. Instead, the Romanian agent in Petrograd was for the first time officially made acquainted with the fact that the retrocession of Southern Bessarabia was demanded as a matter of 'Russian

prestige' and 'political necessity.' In return compensations in the Dobrudja were offered to Romania. In vain the Romanian Government strongly protested, risking the occupation of the principality by Russian troops. Once again Bratianu turned to the Western Powers for sympathy and aid, but found everywhere an unwillingness to offend Russia. On June 13th the Congress of Berlin met, and on July 13th its resolutions were summed up in the famous Treaty of that name. To this Congress the Romanian delegates, Bratianu and Cogalniceanu, were admitted only in an informatory capacity, and were allowed to take part neither in the discussions nor in the resolutions of the Congress. There was, therefore, no redress for Romanian complaints. Russia's demands for the retrocession of Southern Bessarabia were accepted; and Romania was forced to agree to the acceptance, as compensation, of the province of the Dobrudja as far south as a line drawn east from Silistra, touching the Black Sea just south of Mangalia. This was very reluctantly agreed to by the Romanian Parliament, the wording of whose resolution ran: 'Compelled thereto by the decisions of the Great Powers and in order to raise no hindrance to the ratification of peace, the Chamber empowers the Government to submit itself to the united will of Europe by withdrawing from Bessarabia its civil and military authorities and taking possession of the Dobrudja, the Danube Delta, and the Serpents' Island.' The Romanian withdrawal from Bessarabia and occupation of the Dobrudja followed almost at once, since the Berlin Congress had made its recognition of Romanian independence contingent upon the cession of Bessarabia."

RUSSIAN RULE. CAUSES OF DISSATISFACTION

Such was the fateful decision of the Congress of Berlin, which, if it gave the Russian Government the satisfaction of extending its frontiers to the Danube, definitely confirmed the differences which, owing to history, already existed between the two nations. Romania was compelled to cede that part of Bessarabia which belonged to her (and this, as a matter of fact, was the least Romanian part of the province). The loss of territory was not of so much importance as the fact that national sentiment had been outraged and that the Russian Government had unfortunately played into the hands of those Russophobes in Romania who

maintained that Russia was never to be trusted. The seizure of Bessarabia accounted in no small measure for the complete reversal of Romania's policy and the conclusion in 1883 of the secret Treaty of Alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary.

RELATIONS WITH THE UKRAINE

The Bessarabian national movement, which sought at first autonomy during the Russian revolution, and then gradually severed all relations with Russia, is described in its relations with the first experiment of an independent Ukrainian State in the following lines:

"The first territorial difficulty arose with the Ukrainian Rada. In a declaration made by the latter early in August, Bessarabia was included within the frontiers of the contemplated Ukrainian State. The Bessarabian Committee indignantly protested; and a deputation was sent to Kiev pointing out that the Ukrainian demand infringed the principle of self-determination. The Rada finally gave way and agreed to the exclusion of Bessarabia from the frontiers of its jurisdiction, a decision which it subsequently confirmed repeatedly even so late as January 15, 1918, and only eventually reversed after the German intervention in the Ukraine had drawn it within the orbit of the Central Powers." (Page 24.)

IV

EXTRACTS AND SUMMARIES FROM RECENT STUDIES OF BESSARABIA

ROMANIA'S RIGHT TO BESSARABIA

In the American review *Foreign Affairs* of April 1940, Professor Philip E. Mosley of Cornell University writes an article under the title "Is Bessarabia Next?" in which he arrives at the following conclusions about Romania's right to Bessarabia:

1. On the historic grounds that the area was in effect part of Romania prior to 1812.
2. On the vote of the *Sfatul Țărei* in 1918.
3. On the presence of an absolute Romanian majority in that province.
4. On the express moral recognition of England, France and Italy.
5. On the *de jure* recognition of the Soviet Government.

The following quotations are made from Professor Mosley's article in support of his conclusions:

- (1) "After several centuries part of the principalities of Moldavia, Ottoman suzerainty and Bessarabia was ceded to Russia in the Russo-Turkish Treaty of 1812. In the Treaty of Paris of 1856 the South-Western Districts were returned to Moldavia and thus came to form a part of the United Principality of Romania; in 1878 the Congress of Berlin handed them back to Russia over the protest of Romania."
- (2) "Following the separation of the Ukrainians from Russia in the Autumn of 1917 the autonomy of Bessarabia was proclaimed (October 20, 1917) by the Council of the Land, *Sfatul Țărei*, formed . . . by representatives of many local organizations, both Romanians and non-Romanians. On March 27, 1918, the Council voted for the union of Bessarabia with Romania, and on November 27th it dissolved."

- (3) "According to the Russian census of 1897 the approximately two million inhabitants of Bessarabia were divided as follows:

47·6 per cent Romanians; 27·8 per cent Russians and Ukrainians combined; 11·8 per cent Jews; 5·3 per cent Bulgarians; and 3·1 per cent Germans. Not to mention numerous smaller groups.

In the census of 1930 the Romanians accounted for 56·2 per cent. The Russians and Ukrainians for 23·3 per cent.

"Now that the relative majority of the Romanians have been turned into an absolute one . . . even when the popular figures are broken down district by district, the 'Russians and Ukrainians combined have an absolute majority (50·8 per cent) only in the district of Hotin. . . .'"

- (4) "Recognition of the union of Bessarabia with Romania was granted by the Treaty of Paris (October 28, 1920), which was ratified over a Soviet protest by Great Britain on June 1, 1921, by Romania April 7, 1922, by France on March 11, 1924, and by Italy on March 8, 1927."

- (5) "Russia and Romania adhere to the Kellogg-Briand Pact in which they reject War as an instrument of national policy. On the initiative of the Soviet Government a supplementary protocol was signed in Russia February 9, 1929, in which the Soviet Union and its Western neighbours, including Romania, agreed to put the Kellogg-Briand Pact into effect at once without waiting for other States to ratify it."

"As far as Russia's relations with her neighbours were concerned this defect (the absence of any agreed definition of aggression) was remedied by the London Convention for the Definition of Aggression (signed on July 3, 1933, and effective on October 16, 1933) of which Romania was a signatory. An almost identical Pact signed on July 4, 1933, between The Soviet Union, the members of the Little Entente and Turkey went into effect on February 17, 1934. By Article I of each of these conventions the contracting parties agreed to accept the definition of aggression as contained in the Politis Report of May 24, 1933, at the Disarmament Conference. Paragraph 23 of the Report stated that 'By Territory is here meant territory over which a State actually exercises authority.' Thus, the

conventions of July 3 and 4, 1933, constituted a further *de jure* recognition of the Soviet Russian Boundary as on the dates on which the conventions took effect. . . ."

THE QUESTION OF RUSSIAN RECOGNITION OF THE UNION OF BESSARABIA TO ROMANIA

This is an extract from an unpublished work on *Russo-Romanian Relations* by Victor Cornea, containing a description of the first diplomatic contacts between the U.S.S.R. and Romania after the last war, with special reference to the attitude of the Soviet Government in regard to the recognition by Russia of the union of Bessarabia with Romania in 1918.

The Treaty of Paris of March 28, 1920, had sanctioned the decision of the *Sfatul Tărei* by which the union of Bessarabia with Romania was proclaimed. The only reservation made by this treaty was that questions of detail should eventually be submitted to the League of Nations for arbitration, though this by no means involved any discussion as to the validity of the new frontier or Romania's sovereignty over Bessarabia (Art. 9).

The Soviet Government contested the right of the Powers to dispose of any former Tsarist territory without first being consulted. (Apparently they chose to forget that Russia was not a party to the Peace Conference.) Furthermore, they demanded a plebiscite. This was opposed by the Romanian Government on the ground that the decision of the representatives of the Bessarabian people as expressed through the vote of the *Sfatul Tărei* amounted to a real plebiscite in all but name. On the strength of this contention the Allied Powers turned a deaf ear on the Soviet postulates, and not only recognized the union by the Treaty of Paris but, with the exception of Japan, even ratified it.

The Soviet Government had, however, changed its attitude even before the Peace Conference came to an end. This was clearly indicated by the first official contacts between Soviet and Romanian representatives as recorded at the time by M. V. V. Tilea, in his account of "Romania's diplomatic action during 1918-1920." Here are the main facts referred to by this authoritative account.

In January 1920, that is before the signing of the Treaty of Paris, M. Vaida-Voevode, chief Romanian delegate at the Conference, sent an emissary, M. Ciotori, to Copenhagen to discuss

with the Soviet representative there, M. Litvinoff, various questions, such as the return of the Romanian gold deposited during the war in Moscow for safety, the repatriation of the Romanian war prisoners from Russia, etc. It was thought that these discussions would afford an opportunity to ascertain the Soviet Government's views on the question of Bessarabia as well.

In February the Romanian emissary was able to report that "after a long and heated talk with M. Litvinoff, the latter had recognized the right of Bessarabia to unite with Romania." Thereupon an exchange of notes followed between M. Litvinoff and M. Tschitcherin, then Commissar for Foreign Affairs, confirming Russia's readiness to come to terms with Romania on the Bessarabian issue. "The ending of the military operations between the two Soviet republics of Russia and Ukraine"—ran Tschitcherin's dispatch—"urge the necessity for Russia and Romania to establish pacific and useful relations advantageous to both." This reply implicitly recognized Romania's right to Bessarabia, for, as the author further points out, the following passage could have no other meaning: "The Soviet Government is of the opinion that all outstanding differences between the two countries can be removed by peaceful negotiations, and all territorial questions can be resolved amicably."

The Romanian Government could expect no more at that time, as obviously "a government whose internal authority was in continual growth could not possibly give up spontaneously its claim to a territory which once belonged to the country they represented, should their reply have contained a more explicit renunciation of Bessarabia." The writer goes on to say: "the negotiations would have been rendered purposeless."

Unfortunately, immediately this object had been achieved, M. Vaida's Cabinet was overthrown by elements prejudiced against any compromise with the Soviet regime. Thus its policy of reaching a settlement with Russia and eventually obtaining their formal recognition of Bessarabia was then frustrated. This omission, however, was repaired by the special conventions of 1929 and 1933 signed by Russia and Romania defining non-aggression. . . .

RUSSIAN METHODS OF ADMINISTRATION IN BESSARABIA BEFORE THE
UNION OF THE PROVINCE TO ROMANIA IN 1918

The following passage is quoted from Charles Upson's book, *Bessarabia*, published by Dodd, Mead & Co., of New York.

We have no accurate knowledge of the population of Bessarabia during the last years of its independence; but we do know from many sources that the Russians had no sooner taken over the province than there was an enormous exodus of the peasantry across the Pruth into free Moldavia; most scholars believe that Bessarabia lost about one-third of its population during the first year or two of the Russian occupation.

General Kisseleff himself¹ said: "The inhabitants fled out of Bessarabia, preferring the Turkish regime, hard though it was, to ours."

We have a report of Bishop Demetrius Sulima of Bender and Akkerman to the Metropolitan, Gabriel Banulesco-Bodoni, stating (November 9, 1812) that the entire population of the village of Saba (Shaba) near Akkerman had fled, except for three or four families. In their place, by the way, the Russians established French Swiss settlers, whose descendants still occupy this village. Nor is the reason hard to seek.

The archives of Kishineff are still full of complaints from headmen of the villages about demands and outrages at the hands of the Russian troops; and word had spread among the peasants that the Russian system of serfdom was to be introduced in place of the mild Moldavian land-tenure.

So serious was the danger of depopulation that the Pruth was lined with garrisons to prevent Moldavians from crossing; and the Government started a rumour all over Bessarabia that the plague was raging in Moldavia proper, which was not the case.

The first Russian census after the annexation (1816) revealed a province almost solidly Romanian; of a population of about half a million, 92½ per cent were Moldavian and Ukrainian, 1½ per cent Lipovans (Russian heterodox), 4½ per cent Jews, 1·6 per cent other races. We know that some Bulgarians had come in about 1770, 1790 and after 1806; and there was a large Bulgarian immigration in the first decade of Russian occupancy.

To-day the Bulgarians form one of the most solid elements in

¹ Kasso, *Russia on the Danube*, p. 211.

Southern Bessarabia, numbering with the Gagaoutzi (Turkish-speaking Christians also from the Dobrudja) nearly 150,000. Colonization brought in numerous Great Russian peasants, and the Russian bureaucracy imported Russian office-holders and professional men.

The Russians proceeded slowly with their organization of the country as a Russian province (*gubernia*). General Harting, Governor-General from 1813 to 1816, had endeavoured to introduce the system at once, but was unfortunate in his selection of officials (*Capodistria* wrote to his successor, Bakhmetieff: "Send back at once out of Bessarabia all of General Harting's appointees"), and roused vigorous protests from the boyars. The old Russian Imperial Government was never an administrative success, and least of all in Bessarabia.

General Kisseleff, venting his disgust over conditions under Harting, wrote Alexander I: "Everything there is for sale, everything has its price, and the prefects are obliged to steal more than the rest, seeing that they have paid twenty or thirty thousand rubles apiece for their nominations."

As conditions were going from bad to worse, St. Petersburg finally appointed a Viceroy, Count Vorontzoff (1823-44), who remained there during the terms of seven governors. He did his best to improve matters; but we have a letter of General Kisseleff's of June 11, 1833, in answer to one of his, saying: "You paint me a very sad picture of Bessarabia. The Moldavians are in a hurry to sell their estates, while in the Bucovina the landowners pay a 30 per cent tax, but praise the regularity and honesty of the administration. You have been badly served by the governors who keep being charged at Kishineff, and by those officials who are the dregs of Russia and Moldavia."

Even Tsar Alexander's rescript speaks of "unsatisfactory officials, undesirable Russians, gathered in haste, in the exigencies of the time." A great curse was the official favouritism at St. Petersburg, by which huge grants of land or appointments were made at Bessarabian expense, without regard to Bessarabian advantage; indeed, the plan was in part to supplant the native Moldavian gentry. We find, e.g., that in the district of Akkerman Count Nesselrode was given 25,000 acres in 1824 and the same amount also in Bender; in 1825 the daughter of Field-Marshal Kutusoff, 15,000; and so on for nearly sixty grants in those two districts alone.

BESSARABIA—THE FACTS ABOUT A DISPUTED DISTRICT

The following passage is from an unpublished study of Bessarabia by John Capel:

The original Basarabia was merely a small district to the north of the Delta, from the inflow of the Pruth to the sea. At the time when the Turks approached it this little strip was in the hands of the Prince of Wallachia, the southern Ruman State, Mircea the Old, of the line of Basarab. Therefore the Turks dubbed it "Basarabia," just as they had named the district to the south of the Delta "Dobrogea" after Dobrotici, its ruler when they first drew near to it. The First Bessarabia soon passed to the princes of Moldavia. But when the Turks transformed the territory between the Delta and the Dniester into a military zone, the name was stretched to cover all that south-eastern corner of Moldavia.

This Second Bessarabia formed only about one-third of the "triangle" gained by Russia in 1812. But it was found convenient to stretch the name yet again. By that simple means a distinction could be made where there was no difference.

Nothing could have been more successful. In course of time the peoples, the politicians and even some of the scholars of Western Europe came to regard "Bessarabia" as a place quite distinct from Moldavia. And when a "Rumania" appeared on the map, combining Wallachia and Moldavia, it became all the easier for the folk of the West to remain ignorant of the fact that there was any racial connection between the lands on either side of the Pruth, or that the new "Rumania" had any right to claim Bessarabia.

There is no Bessarabian race. Nor is there a Moldavian race, though the Russians were careful to encourage the Rumans of Bessarabia and of South Russia to call themselves by that name, especially after the Moldavia from which Bessarabia had been torn became merged in a "Rumania."

Russia has never ceased to endeavour to give the impression that there is some distinction between "Moldavians" and Rumans. When in 1924 the U.S.S.R. created, for advertisement purposes, a small self-governing area in one of the mainly Ruman areas just across the Dniester from Bessarabia it was styled "The Autonomous *Moldavian Republic*."

But "Moldavia" (Rumanian: Moldova) is merely the name of a principality whose cradle was the valley of a little Carpathian stream far from Pruth or Dniester—the Moldava. Other than politically, there never were any "Moldavians." Nor are there any "Wallachians." It is probable that "Wallach" was a name given by the Germanic barbarians to all Latin-speaking peoples; "Walsch" is still used by Germans to describe their Latin neighbours, and our own Teutonic forefathers called the Romano-Britons by that same name—there are Wallachs at one end of what used to be Roman Europe, and Welsh at the other. Whatever the origin of the name, the Greeks of the Eastern Roman Empire very early called the Balkan cousins of the Rumans "Vlachs"; and centuries later the newcoming Hungarians described the Rumans of Transylvania as "Olah." But no such word exists in Rumanian. The southern Ruman State, Wallachia, has always been to the Rumans "Muntenia," the mountain land, with a subdivision to the west of the River Olt, "Oltenia." And these two together were for long known as *Tsara Romaneasca*, the Ruman land; and had not Moldavia been a separate State, it too could have shared that simple and significant name.

In short, Oltenia, Muntenia and Moldova (which included, of course, "Bessarabia") were merely the Leinster, Munster and Connaught of a very real "Rumania." And, by the way, Transylvania was that of "Rumania's Ulster. . . ."

V

POPULATION OF BESSARABIA

THE RACIAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION OF BESSARABIA
AND THE TOTAL NUMBER OF ROMANIANS WHO ARE NOW
UNDER RUSSIAN RULE SINCE THE OCCUPATION OF BESSARABIA
BY RUSSIA IN 1940

In another section of this booklet, in the Memorandum presented in 1919 at the Peace Conference by the Bessarabian Delegation (pages 18-19), ample information is given on the ethnical character of Bessarabia at the time when the province was first occupied by Russia in 1812, and on the subsequent changes which more than one hundred years of Russian occupation produced. Even thus the absolutely Romanian character of Bessarabia remained fundamentally intact, and after the union of the province to the mother country it became naturally and organically integrated in the Romanian Nation and State.

According to the census effected in 1930, the population of Bessarabia of nearly 3,000,000 is made up as follows: Romanians, 1,610,757; Russians, 351,912; Bulgars, 164,726; Ukrainians, 314,211; Germans, 81,000. The rest of the total is made up by Jews and by a few Tartars and Armenians in the south.

THE NUMBER OF ROMANIANS IN THE SOVIET MOLDAVIAN REPUBLIC

The Moldavian Republic, which has an area of 8,434 km., consists of eleven districts, namely: Camenca, Codima, Balta, Ribinta, Ananiew, Cotovschy, Dubasari, Grigoriopol, Slobozia, Tiraspol and Ocna Rosia. The republic is adjacent to Northern Bessarabia and has a total population of 567,306. Its present capital is Tiraspol.

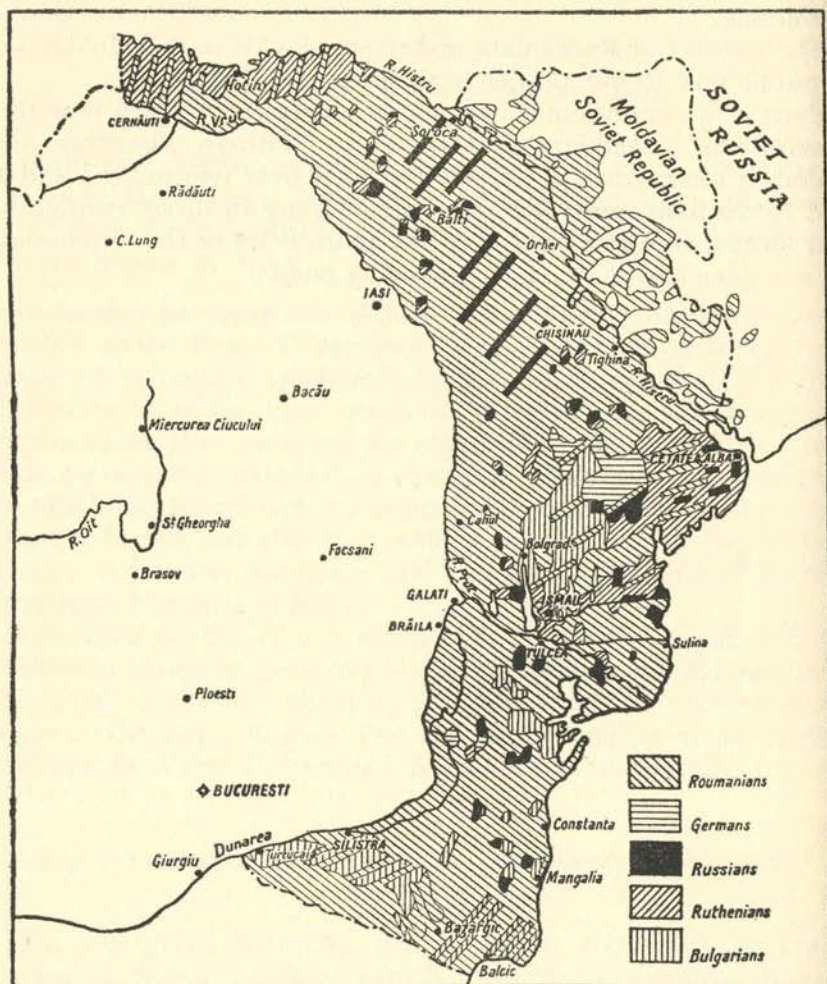
Izvestia, in its issue of August 29, 1924, writes that in the district of Ribinta there are 48,738 inhabitants, of whom 25,387 are Romanian; in Dubasari there are 57,371 inhabitants, of whom

BESSARABIA 1812-1940

33,690 are Romanian; and in Tiraspol the whole population is Romanian. At Ananiew, of 43,545 inhabitants 24,249 are Romanian.

The number of Romanians under Soviet rule in the Moldavian Republic and Russia proper is given as 500,000.

Even if the minimum of 500,000 is accepted, to which now the Bessarabian Romanians and those in Northern Bucovina are added, it means that at present there are over two million and a half Romanians under Russian rule who are in direct contiguity and form a compact mass with the main body of the Romanian nation. (See also map on the following page.)



Ethnographic map of Bessarabia (after Paul Langhans) and of the Moldavian Soviet Republic.

VI

LAND REFORM AND OTHER ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENTS IN BESSARABIA SINCE 1918

BESSARABIAN LAND REFORM

One of the main achievements carried out under the Romanian administration in Bessarabia was a very drastic land reform by which the Bessarabian peasants, without distinction of race and creed, entered into the possession of the land which they had previously cultivated, under a half-servitude tenancy, on the large estates then prevalent in the province.

The rise of an independent peasantry in Bessarabia, following this reform, was in marked contrast to the dependent status of their kinsmen in the Moldavian Soviet Republic, or indeed of all the peasantry in Soviet Russia, through the land collectivization enforced by the Soviets.

The following passage is quoted from David Mitrany's *The Land and the Peasant in Romania*, published by the Oxford University Press, 1930:

"The Bessarabian land reform displayed a characteristic levelling tendency. It expropriated in full: (a) former State domains; (b) former Crown domains; (c) all mortmain estates; (d) estates belonging to the towns, beyond the area needed for town-planning purposes; (e) estates of foreigners—i.e. of all those who on January 1, 1919, eight days after the promulgation of the decree, had not chosen to become Romanian citizens; (f) estates which had been farmed out during five consecutive years.

"Monasteries were allowed to retain half a hectare for each monk, as well as gardens and vineyards. The decree ordered the expropriation from private property of 1,000,000 hectares, everything above 100 hectares arable land being taken away without exception. If that measure did not produce the gross total of 1,000,000 hectares, the decree allowed expropriation to go even beyond the limit of 100 hectares. Vineyards, gardens and specialized model farms were exempt. As in Bucovina, the decree expropriated each individual owner down to the limit of 100 hectares, without regard to the number of properties he possessed. Joint properties were treated as if they were in the possession of a single owner."

OTHER REFORMS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Before the union of Bessarabia to Romania there were practically no surfaced roads in the province. The towns, even the district capitals, were connected only by roads known as sleah, which could be used only in the periods of summer drought and when the ground was frozen in wintertime. The railway system was so undeveloped that only four of Bessarabia's nine district capitals could be reached by rail.

The Romanian regime has spared neither trouble nor technical and financial means to end this state of things through an intensive policy of communications. Several bridges have been built across the Pruth in order to facilitate communications between the new province and the old kingdom. Thousands of miles of roads and highways have been built and surfaced; and the railway system has been transformed by the introduction of standard-gauge track and by the construction of new lines to facilitate the circulation of men and goods.

The Romanian regime has devoted particular attention to medical assistance, which in the time of the Russian occupation can hardly be said to have existed in Bessarabia. At Chisinau a general inspectorate of public health has been created, hospitals have been rebuilt and equipped, and a campaign has been started against social diseases, in particular against malaria and typhus, which are endemic in Bessarabia and a real social plague. To combat epidemics, especially malaria, hundreds of dispensaries have been created in all parts of the country, and a considerable number of doctors and nurses have been sent into Bessarabia. Finally, professional associations, an entire novelty for Bessarabia, have been created; agricultural chambers in all district capitals, chambers of commerce and industry at Chisinau, Balti and Cetatea Alba, and a chamber of labour at Chisinau.

The Romanian regime applied in Bessarabia for the first time a law on vocational training and on the exercise of occupations which was voted in 1936 for the purpose of regulating work and of protecting the workers.

The National Credit Institutions, the one for agriculture and the other for trades, the creation of which was recently voted by the Romanian Parliament, were of obvious importance for the whole country and especially for Bessarabia.

Thus the participation of Bessarabia in the political, national, economic, intellectual and religious life of the Romanian State marked for this province the beginning of a new era of progress and prosperity.

PROGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL, TRADE AND BANKING ESTABLISHMENTS IN BESSARABIA UNDER ROMANIAN ADMINISTRATION

According to the census of 1930, there were in Bessarabia 36,392 industrial, trade and banking establishments. Of these 15,352 were purely industrial (1,195 of which were motor-driven industries), the others trade and banking institutions.

Of the industrial establishments, 52 per cent were created after 1919, that is during the twenty years of Romanian administration, and 73 per cent of the other establishments were initiated during the same period.

The number of personnel employed in industry, trade and banking in Bessarabia was 75,659, of whom 35,707 were employed in industry.¹

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Romania has adopted in her northern province an increasingly active policy destined to improve the health of the population. Institutions engaged in social work and assistance have more than doubled in number under the Romanian administration.

These include institutions for the assistance of children and school children, families, aged people, also medical and sanitary services.

In 1919 there were thirty-two State and privately managed institutes engaged in social assistance work.

In 1935 there were eighty-four State and privately managed institutes engaged in social assistance work.

Out of the latter figure seventy-two had declared budgets with a total annual expenditure of 16,755,124 lei.²

¹ The above figures are taken from *Anuarul Statistic al Romaniei* (The Annual of Statistics, Romania), 1937 and 1938, p. 318.

² Ibid., pp. 184-88.

VII

EDUCATION IN BESSARABIA UNDER RUSSIAN AND UNDER ROMANIAN ADMINISTRATION

The two extracts given below are from two books on Bessarabia—the first written by a Canadian, the other by a Romanian—and are followed, by way of contrast, by a short account, based on figures, of the achievement obtained in the field of education by the Romanian administration.

From Charles Upson Clark's *Bessarabia*, published by Dodd, Mead & Co., New York, 1927:

EDUCATION IN BESSARABIA DURING THE HUNDRED YEARS OF TSARIST RUSSIAN OCCUPATION

"... The native Moldavian majority for a hundred years had no higher school destined to its education in its own language, and for fifty years not a school of any kind in which its language was even taught. Most extraordinary is the discussion in the Russian Duma in 1911, in connection with the proposal, in Article 16 of the Bill dealing with primary education, that in localities where the population was Polish, Lithuanian, German, Tartar, Esthonian, Lett, Armenian, Georgian, etc., instruction in their mother tongue might be granted in Government schools, in case of formal petition by the commune or by a group of parents. A Bessarabian Peasant Party deputy, Gulikin, not a Moldavian but a Russian (one of the schismatic Lipovans), moved to have the Moldavians included in the list of peoples with this privilege. Other Bessarabian deputies—Father Ghepetzky, the wealthy landowner, A. Krupensky, and Sholtuz—protested. . . .

"Naturally this system resulted not in acquisition of Russian by the Moldavians, but in their almost complete illiteracy in any language. According to the latest full Russian figures for Bessarabian literacy (1897), 82 per cent of the male population was unable to read and write, and 96 per cent of the women! In urban centres the proportion was 57 and 78 per cent respectively.

"The preservation of Romanian as a literary language at all in Bessarabian is due primarily to the Church; and there too the Imperial Government took a hand and endeavoured to make the Church an instrument of Russification. That was all the easier in that Russians and Romanians both belonged to the Eastern Orthodox Church; where Russia had to struggle with a different Church, as in Poland, the task was far harder. And yet in Bessarabia their efforts with the Church met with similar unsuccess to that in the school. Their school policy, instead of teaching the Romanians Russian, landed them perhaps deeper in illiteracy; and the like Church policy led to an estrangement between the Romanian peasant and the Russian priest and church, resulting in a peasantry largely without religion, as elsewhere in Russia—one of the most striking phenomena brought to light by the Russian revolution and the Soviet Government. As was well said by Ambassador Paleologue, quoting Napoleon's 'Un archevêque, c'est aussi un préfet de police': 'The Russian clergy was a sort of gendarmerie, paralleling the military gendarmerie.'"¹

In 1880 there were 350 rural schools in Bessarabia with only 19,261 pupils. After 1871 the Romanians were practically barred from acquiring knowledge, for, as the Russians confessed, everything that the pupils learned mechanically by rote and under compulsion in the Russian schools they soon forgot.

In 1905 the gubernial Zemstvo of Bessarabia reported that it was very difficult to make Russians out of the Moldavian pupils, who during the summer vacation forgot the Russian words and expressions which they had learned in school, so that at the beginning of the following school term everything had to be started anew.

In 1911 Bessarabia, with a population of about two and a half million, had only 1,522 schools with 100,375 pupils. In 1912 we find that there were seven "classical" high schools and four real schools. They were attended mostly by the children of the land-owners and of the Russian public officials. In spite of the repeated demands of the autonomous population that the teaching of the Romanian language be obligatory, the teachers in these schools were Russians.

¹ From H. Popovici's *Political Status of Bessarabia*, Washington, 1931.

BESSARABIA 1812-1940

THE PROGRESS OF EDUCATION DURING TWENTY-TWO YEARS OF ROMANIAN ADMINISTRATION

During the term of 1936-37 the kindergartens in Bessarabia reached the total of 425,¹ with a teaching staff of 452 and 18,934 registered small children.

The number of school children attending the elementary schools in Bessarabia during the year 1936-37 was 344,579, made up as follows:

Romanians	..	..	216,163
Ukrainians	..	..	42,084
Russians	..	..	22,023
Bulgarians	..	..	20,611
Germans	..	..	16,101
Jews	..	..	15,836

The number of secondary schools under the management of the Romanian State in Bessarabia was, for the year 1936-37, 91:

<i>Lycées</i> for boys with a seven- or eight-year course	..	..	15
<i>Lycées</i> for girls with a seven- or eight-year course	..	..	13
Secondary schools with a four-year course for boys	..	..	2
Mixed secondary schools with a four-year course	..	..	21
Secondary schools for men teachers	..	..	3
Secondary schools for women teachers	..	..	2
Commercial <i>lycées</i> for boys	..	..	5
Industrial secondary schools with a four-year course for boys	..	..	15
Industrial secondary schools with a four-year course for girls	..	..	9
Other technical schools	..	..	6
			—
			91

The number of pupils in the secondary schools during the same year was 17,774, and the teaching personnel consisted of 765 men teachers and 731 women teachers.

The total number of pupils in the province of Bessarabia who finished successfully the secondary course was for this year 14,166, of whom 10,774 were Romanian and the remainder minority pupils.

¹ *Anuarul Statistic al Romaniei* (Romanian Annual of Statistics), 1937.

VIII

ROMANIAN TREASURES CONFISCATED BY THE SOVIETS

The German advance had menaced București in December 1916. Thereupon the Romanian Government evacuated to Russia the most important part of its archives and some of its artistic and museum treasures, among which was a very rare and valuable archaeological discovery—the Gothic golden treasure of Pietroasa. The National Bank of Romania deposited in the Kremlin in Moscow for safe keeping over 300,000,000 francs in gold and two chests of jewels belonging to Queen Marie of an estimated value of 7,000,000 francs.

After diplomatic relations were resumed between Romania and Soviet Russia, following the pact of non-aggression between the two countries in 1933, negotiations were started for the return of property detained contrary to international custom. Part of the archives and a few of the artistic objects, but not the treasure of Pietroasa, were handed over to the Romanian Government. Similarly the gold and the jewels have not been returned to their owner to this day.

IX

LETTERS TO THE BRITISH PRESS ON THE BESSARABIAN QUESTION¹

BESSARABIA, ITS RULERS AND ITS PEOPLES

To the Editor, *The Times*

Sir,—It is important that no one should believe that Bessarabia was ever “really Russian,” or that it was “grabbed by Romania after the war.” Until as recently as 1812 the lands between Pruth and Dniester, based on the Danube Delta, were merely the eastern half of the Ruman State of Moldavia—though a strip in the south of this district had by 1550 come into the hands of the Turks, who named this fragment after the Ruman Bessarab dynasty. Apart from Tartars and Bulgars in this “Bessarabia” corner, and some Ukrainian immigrants along the Dniester, Moldavia was Ruam; and, though vassal, it was ruled by Christian princes.

Russian rule in Bessarabia was at first mild, later tyrannous, and always corrupt and incompetent. But she failed to Russify the Rumans; and though she brought in Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgars, Germans and even French Swiss, and though she decanted hosts of Rumans into Russia, the Rumans remained in the majority. The 1908 Russian census gave the Rumans over 53 per cent, and the “Russians” only 28 per cent.

Russians now form about one-seventh of Bessarabia’s population, Rumans more than three-fifths, and these 400,000 Russians can be balanced by the Rumans in Russia. Just across the Dniester Moscow has created a “Moldavian” republic, in which Rumanian is an official language.

Russia can put forward no sound claim to Bessarabia. She won it unjustly, ruled over it for only a hundred and six years—very badly—and she never made it Russian.

JOHN CAPEL,

October, 14, 1939.

¹ Before and on the occasion of the third annexation of the province by Russia.

GLADSTONE AND LORD SALISBURY ON BESSARABIA¹

To the Editor, *Manchester Guardian*

SIR,—Your leading article "Russia Moves Again" in your issue of June 28th is a fairly accurate account of the Bessarabian case and the nature of the seizure of Bessarabia by Russia, which you rightly taxed as a "new act of force." The significance as well as the implications of this act for the future peace in South-Eastern Europe can, however, be best demonstrated by recalling some older records of British diplomacy referring to the time of the Berlin Congress which sanctioned the cession of Bessarabia to Russia after the Russo-Romanian-Turkish War of 1877-78. For there are no better arguments to show the precedence of Romania's title to this province or Europe's interest to keep Russia off the Danube Delta than Great Britain's opposition in the past to that annexation. May I therefore quote a few instances when prominent British statesmen displayed while dealing with the "Eastern Question" a marked distaste for Russia's design on this Romanian province.

Gladstone, for instance, had persistently and repeatedly protested against Russia's claim to Bessarabia. In his House of Commons speech of February 1878 he expressed the hope that "peace to come should not be secured by alienating Bessarabia," and again, in March, he expressed the hope that "Russia would not stoop at this petty spoliation of a humble and brave ally" (Romania fought the Turks on the side of Russia), which would be "an impolitic and culpable spoliation." Lastly, after the conclusion of the Berlin Congress, Gladstone accused Disraeli's Cabinet of "selling Bessarabian liberty to Russia, who would now impose her despotic institutions." Still more, in the final debate of June over the Berlin settlement, Gladstone accused Disraeli of conniving with the Russians in that he endorsed the annexation, though "in private" he was not in favour of their claim, a fact which induced Joseph Chamberlain to describe the whole affair "a comedy in private."

The extent to which Great Britain disagreed with Russia on this issue can best be detected, however, from the attitude of Lord Salisbury. The famous memorandum submitted by the

¹ Unpublished.

latter to the Russian Government through Count Schuvalow, Russian Ambassador at the St. James's Court, clearly pointed out that "H.M. Government feels obliged to state its profound regret in case Russia insisted to the end on the retrocession of Bessarabia," adding that Great Britain would only comply with this claim in so far as the other signatories of the Paris Treaty of 1856 (which assigned Southern Bessarabia to Romania) were not disposed to implement its provisions by force of arms.

Nor has this trend of feeling been confined to the Government circles. Professor Seton Watson once remarked that "it was long before public opinion in England could accommodate itself to the sacrifice demanded from Romania."

As to the wisdom of Russia's "coup de force," I recall Lord Derby's remark in the House of Commons on Bessarabia's rape in 1878: "Russia has turned a devoted friend and submissive ally into an enemy." Russia's intervention in Bessarabia therefore transgresses the wider European interest of securing a well-balanced political system in South-Eastern Europe capable of safeguarding the freedom of navigation on the Danube, an interest which can only be safeguarded—as Gladstone pointed out on March 4, 1858, on the eve of the union of the two Danubian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia into modern Romania—if the Danubian nations are rendered strong and united: "If you want to oppose an obstacle to Russia, arm these peoples with freedom and with vigour and the prosperity that freedom brings. . . . Do not polter with them."

A last but none the less relevant point as to manners. In 1878 the occupation of Bessarabia was not permitted until the last Romanian authorities had withdrawn from the province. This time, when the Romanian Government asked M. Molotov to agree to a postponement of evacuation in view of heavy rains, the latter was ready to consider a postponement of only two hours.

VICTOR CORNEA, B.Litt.(Oxon),

July 1, 1940

To the Editor, *The Times* (unpublished)

SIR,—The terrible times in which we live have brought from the British Premier the words of "grief and amazement" applied to the defection of an ally. It seems that nowadays there is no

end to the application of these words. Indeed, with "grief and amazement" I read your editorial "Russia's claim on Romania," published in your issue on June 28th.

What other feeling but of grief can one experience when, contrary to an avowed policy constantly pursued by *The Times*, you are making a *volte-face*, for a doubtful convenience and administer a kick to a country—who for no fault of hers is called to yield to pressure—by maintaining that "Bessarabia is at least as much Russian and Ukrainian as she is Romanian." It is intolerable that in this way you should also rob Romania in her predicament of the moral and legitimate grounds on which her title to the respective territory is founded.

With what other reaction but one of "amazement" does one read the flagrant inaccuracy of such a statement?

Here is a comparative table of the actual distribution of the Bessarabian races as shown by the Russian and Romanian official statistics:

Russian census 1897:

(1,935,412)

Romanians	..	921,000	
Russians	..	158,000	} 537,000
Ukrainians	..	379,000	
Bulgarians	..	101,000	

Romanian census 1930:

(2,864,402)

Romanians	..	1,609,000	
Russians	..	353,000	} 668,000
Ukrainians	..	315,000	
Bulgarians	..	143,000	

But not content with the inaccuracies which I venture to correct, you further state that "it cannot be said that the (Romanian) administration has succeeded in winning the devotion of the majority of the inhabitants." Is this because it was in Bessarabia that of all the Romanian provinces the agrarian reform which gave land to the peasants was the most drastic? Is it because the collectivization of the land in Soviet Ukraine has caused hundreds and thousands of peasants to cross the Dniester under the fire of the Russian frontier guards and put themselves under the protection of the Romanian State? Is it because the Russian middle and land-propertied classes would prefer to

exchange the present conditions with conditions prevailing in Russia?

I consider the whole tendency of the article one of malice which is both gratuitous and precipitate.

The isolation of Romania—following the collapse of France, which you do not mention—is a fact which results from your own remarks that the Allied guarantee “was given in respect of certain countries and not others.” Would it not have been wiser to start your article with its concluding sentence that “more detailed information must be awaited before this transaction can be judged in all its implications.”

The external policy of Romania was characterized by the utmost honesty and loyalty since the beginning of the war in a patently difficult situation for her both from the geographical and political point of view.

And if one asks after reading your article *cui prodest*, it is hard to find out to whom it may benefit.

LIVIU CRISTEA,

June 28, 1940

To the Editor, *The Times*

SIR,—With reference to the article in *The Times* to-day entitled “Russia’s claim on Romania,” I was surprised, as a Bessarabian, to find in it, quite apart from the general attitude of the article (which I feel is not in harmony with the opinion of the British public as a whole) or the crisis which is its pretext, a few inaccuracies and contradictions which I think ought not to pass without comment.

The first and really rather startling statement is that: “Bessarabia is at least as much Russian or Ukrainian as Romanian.” On the purely ethnical side of the question, latest statistics (1930) give, out of a total population of 2,864,000 inhabitants, 1,611,000 Romanians (56 per cent of the total), 352,000 Russians (that is 12.3 per cent) and 314,000 Ukrainians (that is 11 per cent); so that even if Russians and Ukrainians are put together the Romanian majority is still undisputable. Concerning the historical aspect of the question, Bessarabia from the fourteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century was part of the Romanian Principality of Moldavia; it was only in 1812 that it was annexed

by Russia. The three southern districts were returned to Moldavia after the Crimean War (1856), but taken again by Russia after the Russo-Turkish War (1878), when a protest against the iniquity of the Russian extortion, and of the acquiescence of the Great Powers, was made by Mr. Gladstone in the House of Commons. And to correct another misapprehension in the above-mentioned article, it is not those southern districts which are now in question, but the whole province.

Concerning "the feelings of the majority of the inhabitants" and whether "King Carol has in fact turned more and more to Nazi Germany as his protector," I will leave it to the good taste and political intuition of your readers to decide; but articles on these lines might certainly have the effect of influencing Romania to act in that direction.

VICTOR E. BUDEANU,

June 29, 1940

X

BUCOVINA

From early medieval times the territory which the Austrians have called Bucovina, after the forests of beech which are a feature of its landscape, constituted an integral part of the Romanian Principality of Moldavia. Bucovina, in fact, is the cradle of the Moldavian State. It is on this territory that Suceava, the ancient capital of Moldavia, and the residence of the Moldavian princes was established. The whole province is covered with monasteries and other monuments which bear witness to the intimate connection of Bucovina with the history of Moldavia.

We give below an extract from a Memorandum presented to the Peace Conference of 1919 by the Romanian delegation on Bucovina.

Bucovina is a fragment (ten thousand square kilometres) of Moldavia. It was detached in 1777 from this province, when the latter was a principality under Turkish rule. This veritable rape of Bucovina under a diplomatic arrangement with Austria was recognized as such by the Empress Marie Thérèse herself.

The Austrian administration endeavoured to lessen as far as possible the importance of the Romanian element, which in 1775 constituted almost the whole population of the province. But whereas the Magyars in Transylvania, for instance, attempted to destroy the national character of this province by violent assimilation of the Romanians, Austria preferred to introduce alien elements into Bucovina by colonists brought from other countries and by favouring the immigration of populations from neighbouring countries.

The result was the creation of an amalgam of nationalities in which the Romanian and Ruthenian element are the most numerous. Yet Austria never succeeded, even taking into account the official statistics most favourable to the Ruthenians, in registering that the Ruthenians constituted more than three-eighths of the total population of the country.

Moldavia has always claimed Bucovina. Bucovina itself has always wanted to return to Moldavia, where a very active irredentist movement existed under the Austrian regime. The

breakdown of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy presented Bucovina with an opportunity to express its will. A provisional Government representing the national assembly of the Romanians of the province and all nationalities of Bucovina proclaimed on November 28, 1918, at Cernautzi the unconditional union of Bucovina with Romania. . . .

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BESSARABIA 1812-1940

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